

NORTHERN BC HEROS HELICOPTER EMERGENCY RESCUE OPERATIONS SOCIETY

Today I am honoured to be announcing an exciting new advancement in medical care for the people of northern B.C. We, the Northern BC Helicopter Emergency Rescue Operations Society (HEROS) are here to tell you about an essential service that will save lives and help keep people out of long-term medical care.

What we are creating is a game-changer. Our vast distances, our adverse climate, and the challenges of being surrounded by mountains demand we have a doctor-led air ambulance helicopter that can reach people in medical distress, wherever they are.

In an emergency, seconds can mean the difference between life and death. There is no other area of modern medicine where such a small upfront investment can make such a profound difference in improving medical outcomes than a rapid-response, doctor-led EMS helicopter service.

Our pilots will bring a team of highly-skilled paramedics, doctors, and trauma nurses to fill a void that has existed for too long for people who live in this part of the province of British Columbia. We will bring the hospital to the patient.

HEROS will make it safer for people who drive our highways; for boaters in our lakes and rivers; for recreational campers, hikers, horseback riders, dirt bikers and snowmobilers in our backcountry; and it will increase workplace safety in our forests, mines and oilfields. We will accomplish that by being there as quickly as humanly possible in the time of need when an accident or medical emergency happens.

Trauma is the No. 1 killer of North Americans under the age of 44. If you live in northern B.C., where specialized medical care is often a day's car ride away, the odds are not in your favour should you have a medical emergency. Statistics show that of the people who die in this region of traumatic injuries, 75 per cent will die before they reach the hospital. Let me repeat this, 75 per cent will die before they get to a hospital. It's even worse in northwestern B.C., where the death rate is 82 per cent. In the Lower Mainland, where trauma centres are close, the death rate is 12 per cent.

Every year in B.C., an average 7,500 people die of unnatural causes. Of that total, based on international statistics, between 45 and 55 per cent have what are considered survivable conditions. That means there are literally hundreds of people who die needlessly because of delays getting to trauma centres. Some of you may know this firsthand and have had loved ones die or suffer because of the system that is in place now. We at HEROS find these numbers to be absolutely unacceptable. Improving these statistic and saving lives that could be needlessly lost is the mission and driving force behind HEROS.

The Fraser Health Authority estimates it costs B.C. taxpayers \$2.8 billion per year in lost productivity, long-term care and rehabilitation for people with traumatic injuries. That \$2.8 billion does not include the cost of recovery after strokes or heart attacks. Our HEROS helicopter will bring medical care to sick or injured people faster, before a logger loses the use of a limb in a chainsaw accident or before stroke victims suffer permanent paralysis because they didn't get the clot-busting treatment in time. Our service will be a cost-effective means of reducing the length of hospital stays.

Operating from a base at Prince George airport our HEROS helicopter will eventually provide continuous coverage, able to operate safely at all hours of the day, every day, in most weather conditions. It will be capable of reaching patients in remote locations, no matter where they are. We will have a helicopter that can fly 273 kilometers in one hour to allow rescues and patient transfers from as far west as Houston, north to Dawson Creek, east to the Alberta border, and south as far as Lac la Hache. If needed, we can refuel to extend our range. We estimate we will need about \$5.5 million to purchase our own helicopter, secure hangar and office facilities, and operate the service in the first year, with approximately half our budget supplied by government sources.

We have a great example next door of what is possible for a non-profit EMS helicopter service. In 2011, Alberta government sources paid \$6.7 million to fund 21 per cent of the \$31.5 million budget to fund a service of seven helicopters flying for the non-profit STARS, the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society. That same year, the B.C. government paid \$15 million to fund 100 per cent of the budget for its air ambulance helicopter service, which has four helicopters, all owned and operated by for-profit companies.

Our proposed not-for-profit funding model will be based on a public-private partnership unique to B.C. which would involve the B.C. Ambulance Service; all levels of government; the First Nations Health Authority; aboriginal communities; regional authorities; search and rescue organizations; other emergency services; the forest, mining and petroleum industries, local businesses; and community-minded individuals. We will create opportunities for a large base of volunteers to join HEROS and take part in fund-raising activities that will enhance our budget.

We will secure partnerships, facilitate creative fundraising events, encourage corporate and private donations, and promote the sale of HEROS merchandise and memberships.

Taking our inspiration from the will of the people who want this service to protect lives, we will have what it takes to make HEROS fly.

The Technology Exists

HEROS has the WILL

HEROS has the Expertise

HEROS WILL find the Money

HEROS will FLY and most Importantly

HEROS will SAVE LIVES.